

Howard Finster and The Trinity

Paradise Gardens Park and Museum Chairman Tommy Littleton first met Rev. Howard Finster in the early 90's. The tireless creative energy and Divine inspiration of the famed artist left a lasting impression and Littleton planned to visit Finster's legendary art environment in Chattooga County Georgia at the earliest possible date. Though years passed before that visit took place, the intrigue remained.

The Gardens had begun to suffer from the passing of time, the damp, swampy and humid climate and the advancing age of Paradise Gardens creator. Howard was in his 70's and the demand for his artwork had begun taking him away from his daily work in the Gardens. Littleton perceived the struggle and began to help Finster and his family by bringing volunteers and helping with the annual Finster Fest art festival.

Soon a non-profit formed and a dedicated group of friends began to undertake the preservation and restoration work. After Finster passed away in October of 2001 Littleton was asked to be Chaplain of Paradise Gardens and to serve as co-chair of the non-profit. Years of struggle and hard work ensued as funding efforts yielded limited results and the decaying structures of Paradise Gardens amplified the groups sense of urgency. After the non-profit Board agreed that a partnership with a larger, more capable entity should be sought and the need to garner more local /grassroots support was vital to the sustainability of the site, the search began for such a partnership. Today that has come to pass as Chattooga County Commissioner Jason Winter has lead a two year effort culminating in grant funding from the ARC and local matching funds through the newly formed executive branch of operation The Paradise Gardens Foundation .Littleton's group will continue to work in coordinating tours, events and education and are delighted to know that Howard Finster's "Garden Of Paradise " will remain a refuge for weary "travelers" from around the world. It is an exciting time for Howard Finster's legacy and those who love him.